

LE JOURNAL D'EXTREME ORIENT
Saigon, 17 August 1967

DECLARATION D'UN PRISONNIER NORD-VIETNAMIE

VIENTIANE (A.F.P.). — Un soldat nord-vietnamien, Nguyen van Bay, 19 ans, a été fait prisonnier à la fin du mois dernier au cours d'un engagement avec les forces royales laotiennes dans la province Sud du pays, a-t-on appris lundi à Vientiane. Le soldat a déclaré notamment pendant son interrogatoire que l'unité nord-vietnamienne dont il faisait partie avait été envoyée au

Laos en avril dernier et qu'elle avait reçu l'ordre de renforcer le Pathet-Lao dans le secteur de Tha Theng, dans la province de Saravane, où il fut capturé. Les journaux laotiens qui rapportent ses déclarations ajoutent qu'avant son départ pour le Laos, il avait été reçu a-t-il dit, avec plusieurs de ses camarades par le président Ho Chi Minh et les dirigeants nord-vietnamiens qui auraient insisté, devant eux, sur l'importance de mener une guerre simultanée contre les Américains aussi bien au Laos que dans le Sud-Vietnam.

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13 Aug 81

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Przekroj, No. 1173, October I, 1967.

From our own correspondent.

Shot Down Over Vietnam.

Conversation with the American captain-pilot whose plane F 105-2 has been shot down over Province Ha Bac.

The first such a conversation I had early in September 1965 with R.N. Daughtrey (I wrote about it in Przekroj, No. 1086). Afterwards I talked to the others; most recently to Donald, Glenn Waltman from Kellog, Idaho. / Waltman / who was born on December 17, 1930; holds the military identity card No. PR 53895 and the rank of Captain in the U.S. Air Force. He belonged to the 13th Air Force Flight, operating from the U.S. base in Korat (Thailand) and flew F 105-2. He was shot down during one of the flights over the North Vietnamese Province Ha Bac.

I am seated face to face with a big, tall man, typically American in his appearance and manners. He wears a loose tunic buttoned up to his neck, and the trousers in the same color: dark red and grey stripes. This suit which closely resembles everyday clothes of the Vietnamese peasants, except for the color -- is worn by all the U.S. pilots shot down over Vietnam and kept in the captivity.

At first I try to learn something of my conversant: his personal life and his past.

- I am married. I have five children: two sons and three daughters. The name of my wife is Marian. No, she does not work (a faint smile). He has enough to do with the five children.

- For four years I have studied law. I have not finished it because of the financial difficulties. While studying I had to work. I got married while in the third year. Then the children came. In those circumstances it was not easy to continue my studies. So I joined the forces. This was in 1955.

- How did you get into the air force?

- Through the university flying course. I participated in it as student. When I was asked to join the forces, I thought that this would solve the financial problems for me and my family. From then on I stayed in the active service.

Six times Captain Waltman took off from the Korat base attacking

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the Vietnamese (air). I parachuted to the ground. I managed to land safely in the mountain forest. I wanted to use the transmitter with which all of us are equipped to signal my location. After bombing our planes continue to fly over the land and the sea trying to rescue with helicopters the pilots who went down. I had no time to do so, however. The Vietnamese were quicker. I found myself surrounded by the people: the militiamen and the members of local civil defense.

- Seeing their angry faces, I must admit I was frightened. Yet, no one hurt me. I was transferred to the Vietnamese authorities and sent to the camp where I still remain.

- We have the medical care here. It is enough to have an upset stomach, something which is not grave but what happens here occasionally, to report to the Vietnamese doctor and receive an effective medication. We get the meals twice a day, their quantity and quality are quite satisfactory. Occasionally the evening meal is too big to eat all at once. Then I save some of it for the next morning. Most frequently we get rice. In addition: bread, potatoes, salad and other vegetables. From time to time meat.

- Main occupations: listening to the radio, reading books. We have a little English library here which includes the books by Dickens and Thackeray.

On the margin. I recall the report by American reporter and photographer, Lee Lockwood, who visited the Democratic Republic of Vietnam last spring. His report: "Recollections of Four Weeks with the Enemy" was published in the April issue of Life (edition for the Asian countries). As is apparent from his report, Lockwood did not go to Vietnam to satisfy the reporter's curiosity. To put it bluntly his purposes were: dollars-profit-espionage. Lee Lockwood shed crocodile tears over allegedly terrifying fate of the American pilots, who are exposed to as "horrible persecution" in the hands of the Vietnamese... their being paraded, last year, through the streets of Hanoi, and their being produced, soon after the new bombings, at the press conference for foreign journalists. In order to support Lockwood's revelations, Life turned to Johnson's "flying ambassador", Avrell Harriman. The latter declared that everything points out to the fact that the captured pilots are exposed to the "moral and psychological

- Christmas - we were captured on Christmas Eve. In the evening which we spent together we said the traditional Christmas prayers. I also remember the Vietnamese New Year, "Tet". This was arranged for us by the Vietnamese. We had an opportunity to try their traditional Year's dishes.

- Have you had any previous knowledge of Vietnam? The country and the nation which you attack? Its past, history and culture?

- Almost nothing, except the information which was given to us in the forces. I was not interested in politics. We were told that our task is the defense of South Vietnam against the infiltration and attack of the Communists from the North. Now I know something. The Vietnamese arrange for us the talks on those subjects.

Everything that deals with the truth about the dirty war, the aggressor's barbarity, and the real objectives of the American invaders - for Harriman and Lockwood amount to "brainwashing". Everything that represents an attempt to widen the horizons of the captured pilots, showing them the truth about the liberation struggle by the attacked nation - is treated as the "moral and psychological pressure".

- What targets did you bomb in Vietnam?

- Military, as we were ordered.

- And what bombs did you use in the raids?

- Different bombs...

- For example?

- The napalm bombs, the bullet bombs...

- The bullet bombs... I put one of them on the table. Such as this? - I ask. My conversant nods. The bomb is of the size of man's hand, shaped like a pineapple, yellow and with characteristic metal wire. The inscription on it says: 1-63, BOMB FRAG: BLU 3/B LOT LOP-104-13. Each time powerful explosion throws out many such bombs from big containers. Inside each bomb contains the explosives and innumerable small bullets. Hence the name: the "bullet bomb". In recent months the Americans have replaced the bullets with the dices. I throw the content of the bomb in front of Captain Waltman.

- What do you think, why the dices are being used now instead of the bullets?

- I suppose because they are more effective. To achieve the same purpose in South Vietnam the other brand of

the "bullet" bomb is carefully being used: the one () needles. The sharp needles are still more difficult to remove from wounds. I put on the table the photographs of the children from Ninh Binh, Ha Bac, Thanh Hoa and Haiphong. The dead and wounded during the air raids where napalm and the bullet bombs were used.

- These are the targets of your air raids - I say.

- I did not know about it - answers the flier after a moment of brief hesitation.

Silence. Stiffling, overpowering silence. In front of me sits a man from the United States. He is by no means primitive. Almost a lawyer. Father of five children.

- Do you know something of my country: Poland?

- Almost nothing.

- Do you know of your own heroes, who fought for freedom of America, such as Washington or Lincoln?

- Obviously.

- And have you heard the name of the Pole: Kosciuszko?

A moment of hesitation.

- No.

- Do you realize that the present war is also opposed by many people in the United States? That its unpopularity is increasing?

- Yes. Now I know something of it. Previously I did not know.

- What is the hardest for you in the captivity?

- The separation from my family.

- Have you any requests?

- If this is possible I would appreciate your taking a letter to my wife. She knows already that I am alive. Yet, each news, you understand...

I understand. I know. While I take the letter from Donald Waltman to his wife, I think of thousands of the Vietnamese families, who, because of the Americans, for years await some news... I shall send this letter by air mail from Poland to the United States. The same evening, late at night I write my own letter to the wife of my conversant.

Mrs. Marion Waltman, 21 W. Mullan av., Kellog, Idaho, U.S.A.

"I do not know you and I do not know whether we shall ever meet. I think that before you get this letter you will have already received some news directly from your husband - one of the U.S. pilots shot down over the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. No doubt, you will receive this news with relief, having one more confirmation that your husband is alive.

When they parachuted to the ground which they were bombing, though deprived of their freedom, they are alive and in good health.

Mrs. Marion Waltman - although I do not know you, I appeal to you as one mother to another. I think that you, as well as all other wives and mothers of the American pilots who were shot down over Vietnam - all those American women who were relieved to learn that their husbands and sons are alive, should join in the protest against this war..."

Again and again I go over the question: when the American pilots who carry the bombs, ordered to do so by the adventurers and the manufacturers of death, can start thinking for themselves?

Monika Warneńska